

Digest of A Performance Audit of the Utah Department of Corrections

Corrections is Challenged by Inmate Growth

The Utah Department of Corrections (UDOC) faces a challenge as its inmate population continues to grow at a rapid rate. Non-traditional methods of incarceration, such as contracts with county jails and private prisons, present fiscal and non-quantitative concerns. Other related challenges facing UDOC are correctional officers' compensation and training, inmate medical services and treatment programs and internal security.

This audit was performed for the Legislative Process Committee in cooperation with the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst. It was limited to identifying costs of incarceration in county jails and to reviewing efficiency/ effectiveness issues in officer training, medical services and therapeutic services. The report also reviews some security issues.

Findings & Recommendations

1. Not all costs of contracting with county jails to house UDOC inmates have been appropriately allocated or reported.

We recommend UDOC allocate the full costs of providing services when contracting with county jails.

2. UDOC subsidizes other correctional entities within Utah by providing free or reduced-rate correctional officer training. UDOC has a high turnover rate of correctional officers and loses many to higher-paying county positions.

We recommend UDOC begin recouping the full cost of training provided to county correctional officers in Utah county jails.

We recommend UDOC update the fees charged to the private prison to reflect the full cost of pre-service training. UDOC should also bill the private prison for correctional officers yearly in-service training.

Findings & Recommendations (continued)

We recommend UDOC seek to raise wages for their correctional officers commensurate to those offered by county jails in Utah (particularly along the Wasatch Front) and western states.

3. UDOC requires a high number of correctional officer pre-service training hours above the average of ten other western states. Many of these hours are mandated by the Peace Officers and Standards Training board.

We recommend the UDOC review correctional officer training hours needed and strategies to retain correctional officers.

4. Medical service treatment has improved, but there are concerns with some related treatment programs.

We recommend UDOC improve control of medical syringes and improve mental health review of patients who have a history of prescription drug overdoses.

We recommend UDOC review enrollment and staffing of the sex offender, substance abuse and mental health treatment programs.

We recommend UDOC review the effects which changing housing assignments have on inmate treatment and review transitional services for paroling inmates.

5. Security compromises exist because: (1) UDOC clinical professionals are not properly custody-trained or POST-certified; and, (2) areas in prison maximum security have failing cell door locking mechanisms.

We recommend UDOC either properly custody-train and certify all clinical professionals that treat and have regular contact with inmates or hire additional custody staff.

We recommend UDOC install sliding cell doors to be used to house maximum security inmates who are either classified as levels 1 & 2 or who are Reception & Orientation inmates.